



Open Your Eyes! Open Your Heart!



Photo: JSI staffperson

Local NGOs in cities across Romania organized human ribbons of remembrance to commemorate those lost to the AIDS epidemic and to raise public awareness. This ribbon was formed in Bucharest, in Revolution Square.

In collaboration with the UN and Romania's Ministry of Health, USAID sponsors an annual AIDS awareness campaign coinciding with World AIDS Day to educate the public and to combat the discrimination faced by those infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS. The slogan of 2002's campaign was "Open Your Eyes! Open Your Heart!"

According to the most recent Ministry of Health data in Romania, 4,591 persons (3,526 children and 1,065 adults) are currently living with AIDS, and another 5,825 (4,416 children and 1,409 adults) are HIV-positive but have not developed AIDS. Although this is a relatively low rate of prevalence (0.04%), a recent World Bank Report states that the epidemic in the region will grow significantly in the next five to ten years even with more effective preventive efforts. A lack of information about how the disease is spread exacerbates the already high-risk levels.

The 2002-2003 AIDS campaign educated one-third of the Romanian population through its activities and events. The campaign included informational sessions in schools, factories, hospitals, and other locations to present correct information about HIV/AIDS, in order to combat discriminatory attitudes toward HIV-positive persons. Public service announcements on TV and on the radio educated people about protecting themselves and those they love.

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